

# Get them fired up for STEM

## PM pitches plan for nation's brightest to inspire students

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** School students will soon get the chance to get up close with 100 of the nation's brightest minds under an initiative suggested by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to spur their interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

This comes after the Prime Minister expressed concern over the lack of interest in STEM among students, particularly the growing divide between urban and rural schools in the subjects.

"Don't view this lightly (as) the rural schools will be left way behind," he said when launching the National Bioeconomy Showcase 2024 here yesterday.

Anwar said the issue over the lack of interest in STEM should be tackled through a multi-ministerial approach, including involving the private sector.

"If possible, get 100 scientists from the biotech sector and government agencies to provide the exposure which will bring much benefit to our students.

"It will take two weeks for a list to be submitted for (the) 100 scientists, who will go to 100 selected schools around the country for this purpose," he added.

He suggested that young scien-



**Take a closer look:** Anwar visiting a booth at the National Bioeconomy Showcase 2024 in Kuala Lumpur. — RAJA FAISAL HISHAN/The Star

tists or PhD holders spend two to three hours once or twice a month to meet up with students in their schools to spur interest in STEM.

"That is why I have always appealed to the professionals, ministries and agencies, as well as successful companies, to spend time at selected schools and universities.

"The students will be amazed

by the abilities of our young scientists," he added.

He noted that it was crucial to develop "indigenous sciences" as mere reliance on foreign scientific findings and breakthroughs will not necessarily elevate the nation's standing in the long run.

"Malaysia will not be able to uplift its capabilities if attention is not given in developing its

strength in indigenous effort, research and industry. This is our challenge," he said.

Anwar said he tasked Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Chang Lih Kang, who was present at the event, to prepare the list.

He also asked Chang to work with the Education Ministry on ways to spur greater interest in STEM subjects among students.

Earlier, Anwar announced an additional RM2mil for the Bio-Based Accelerator (BBA) programme under Chang's ministry.

He added that part of the allocation could be used to organise the young scientists' talks in schools.

Anwar later witnessed the exchange of 11 memorandums of understanding with a total estimated value of RM1.5bil.

In his welcoming speech, Chang said more than 520 biotechnology and bio-based companies are involved in projects with approved investments totalling RM14.3bil, contributing RM37.5bil to the nation's gross domestic product.